

INCOME FROM FARMS IN COFFEE COUNTY FOR YEAR 1962 WAS \$11,000,000.00

Income From Hogs	\$2,176,664.00
Income From Peanuts	2,010,000.00
Income From Timber	1,984,000.00
Income From Cattle	1,530,000.00
Income From Cotton	1,400,000.00
Income From Chickens	765,000.00

CASH ON DEPOSIT IN ALL BANKS WITHIN COFFEE COUNTY, \$21,000,000.00.

AVERAGE TEMPERATURE IN COFFEE COUNTY, 66%.

AVERAGE RAIN FALL (YEARLY) APPROXIMATELY 53 TO 60 INCHES.

PRINCIPAL INDUSTRIES IN COUNTY:

Washington Aluminum Corp.	Enterprise, Ala.	Manufacturers
Sessions Peanut Co.	Enterprise, Ala.	Manufacturers
Textile Mill	Enterprise, Ala.	Manufacturers
Dorsey Trailers	Elba, Ala.	Manufacturers
Winham Power Lifts, Inc.	Elba, Ala.	Manufacturers
Black Lumber Co.	Elba, Ala.	Manufacturers
Kinston Manufacturing Co.	Kinston, Ala.	Manufacturers
Modern Electronics	Kinston, Ala.	Manufacturers

POPULATION OF COFFEE COUNTY AS OF 1960 CENSUS, 30,583.

PROBATE JUDGES OF COFFEE COUNTY

James Claxton	1851 to 1856
P. D. Costello	1856 to 1862
B. W. Starke	1862 to 1868
B. M. Weeks	1868 to 1874
Daniel Gillis	1874 to 1878
B. M. Stevens	1878 to 1892
F. M. Rushing	1892 to 1904
S. N. Rowe	1904 to 1923
J. A. Canley	1923 to 1941
John Brock	1941 to 1947
J. O. English	1947 to 1965

EARLY HISTORY OF COFFEE COUNTY

BY J. D. SMITH, ELBA, ALABAMA

Coffee was created a county on December 29, 1841. By this time the county was filling with settlers coming in from Georgia and other Southeastern states. The Indian wars were still fresh in the minds of the people and it was natural that the county and county seat should have been named for two heroes of these wars. General John Coffee, for whom the county was named, served under General Andrew Jackson during the Creek Indian War of 1813-14. The first county seat of Coffee County was located at Wellborn, located about one-fourth of a mile east of the present Damascus church. The county seat was named for General William Wellborn, who was one of the Alabama Commanders in the Creek Indian War of 1836-37.

The court house at Wellborn was destroyed by fire in March, 1851. The story still persists that the burning of the court house was arson, as most of the people were not satisfied with its location. Due to opposition to rebuilding the courthouse at the relatively inaccessible Wellborn, the legislature, on January 30, 1852, passed an act directing the sheriff to hold an election, on the first Monday in August, 1852, to determine the permanent location of the court house. The voters were authorized to select Wellborn, Elba, or Indigo Head (Clintonville), and the site receiving a majority of the votes was to be the county seat, provided the citizens of the town should build a good and substantial court house and jail free of charge to the county. Due to the fact that more voters were living around Elba, they won the election. The citizens of the town of Elba were well pleased over the selection of their town as the county seat. A mass meeting was held and F.M. Gannons, Nicholas Harper, and James M. Cauthen were appointed as a building committee to see to the courthouse and jail. J.B. Simmons donated the square for the courthouse and a suitable lot for the jail. It is not known how the money was raised to pay for the construction of the building, for Elba was not incorporated at this time.

The courthouse when completed was a painted two story building with a painted railing fence around it. As tobacco chewing was prevalent, it was customary to keep saw dust on the floor of the courtroom. To this end barrels of saw dust were conveniently provided. The title to the courthouse and jail were conveyed to the county on September 12, 1853. It is interesting to note that the courthouse has remained on the same square in Elba since that time.

N.A. Agee, a Montgomery businessman, traveling through Coffee received mostly a succession of pine trees and tall waving grass. Herds of cattle were lazily grazing amid this luxurious natural pasture. When he wrote later in 1909, Agee recalled a tract of level, sparsely settled, unbroken forests of yellow pine which offered few variations for the eye. There was a covered bridge across Pea River which Agee described, but his attention was focused mostly on the roads which he found to be very rough.

There were not any good roads here in Coffee County in the 1850s and indeed, very few public roads of any kind. The main roads connected Elba with the county seats of the adjoining counties. One led from Elba through Indigo Head (Clintonville) to Daleville on westward to Montezuma (Andalusia) in Covington County, one north to Troy to Pike County and one south through Geneva to the Gulf at Fort Walton, Florida. There roads were very crude, being little more than clearings through the woods. In the low arid places logs were used to form a corduroy bed to prevent bogging. Farms and homesites were widely scattered and the roads between communities were maintained by the individuals. The usual mode of travel was by horseback.

The United States census of Coffee County in 1850 showed a population of 6,940, of whom 6,380 were white, 557 were slaves, and 3 were free persons of color. There were 893 white families in Coffee County in 1850 with an average of 6.03 people per family, whereas in 1860 there were 1,375 families with an average 5.96 people per family.

As in all frontier settlements, a large percentage of the people was born in other localities. Most of the original settlers came from Georgia and all except about three per cent came from South and North Carolina. No rich Virginia planters moved into this section of Alabama. Nearly all of these not natives of Alabama had been born South of the Mason and Dixon Line. Only ten people in the county in 1850 were born North of the Mason and Dixon Line.

Most of the early settlers in Coffee County were poor, but some owned slaves, and brought the slaves with them to their new homes. In 1850, there were 557 slaves in the county, by 1860 the number of slaves had increased to 1,417. There were only a few large slave holdings in Coffee County in 1850, only twelve persons owned ten or more slaves, while in 1850 this number had increased to forty-three.

As the county became more thickly settled, villages appeared, for the great distance to shopping centers and the condition of the roads made it imperative for the farmers to have the means of getting supplies close at hand.

Some of the first settlers in the county located at what is now Clintonville. The community was first called Indigo Head because there was so much indigo growing there. One of the first voting precincts in Coffee County was created at Indigo Head in 1845. The village continued to grow until in 1850 the population was around two hundred. This figure could only be matched by Elba. It was a great blow to the citizens of Indigo Head in 1852, when Elba, instead of their village, was selected to become the county seat.

The name of the town was changed from Indigo Head to Clintonville in 1859. Why the name was changed or why Clintonville was selected is not known. The town had prospered through the 1850s, a post office was established there. John A. Fleming was the first post master. During the period there existed in the town eight stores, a blacksmith shop, and two churches, one Methodist and the other Baptist.

The legislature on January 11, 1860 granted a charter to the Clintonville male and female academy. This was the first academy in the county and thus Clintonville became the cultural and education center of the county and remained so for a number of years. Some of the pioneer families were Flemings, Hutchisons, Marshes, Sawyers, Goyens, and Carmichael.

Elba had its economic beginning with the establishment of a ferry across Pea River between what is now Claxton and Polk Streets. The ferry was established by a Mr. McLane. The exact date of the building of the ferry is not known, but it is believed to be in the early 1830s.

The land on which Elba is located was entered by Ephraim King on February 17, 1836. About the year 1840, King sold his holdings to John B. Simmons and his brother-in-law, Cepha T. Yelverton.

Simmons and Yelverton organized the Simmons Mercantile Company, which was the first store in Elba. For many years, the post office was located in their store building and Mr. Simmons served as post master. They called the town Bentonville in honor of Thomas Hart Benton, Colonel, Senator from Missouri, who won the favor of Alabama in the Creek War of 1813-14, serving in Alabama, and commanding Fort Montgomery.

With the growth of the town, the citizens of Bentonville thought the name should be changed to one more fitting for a thriving community. The name was changed in 1846 by placing different names in a hat and drawing. Each person present could submit one name. John B. Simmons who had been reading a biography of Napoleon Bonaparte, containing reference to the island to which he was first banished, placed the name of Elba in the hat. Elba was drawn. In the year 1852, when by the act of the state legislature a voting precinct was created, that new name was officially recognized.

In 1852, after Elba was selected to be the county seat, the town was moved back from the river one-half mile. The town in its new location was planned with the streets leading from the courthouse square. Most of the streets were named for the leading citizens: Claxton, Yelverton, Cordelis, Addison, as well as Court and Polk Streets, run north and south; Davis and Collier, Simmons and Buford Streets, as well as Putman Street, run east and west. On May 7, 1853, an election was held and the people voted to incorporate the town.

In 1860, post offices were located at Geneva, Henderson's Store, Rocky Head, Haw Ridge, and Victoria, besides Clintonville, and Elba. In the election of 1859 boxes were located at the following places: Elba, Danally, Coffee Corner, Tilton's Mill, Simmons Mill, Smut Eye, Indigo Head, Haw Ridge, Grant, Welborn, Geneva, Flat Creek, Old Town and Rushing.

Another community of Coffee County, in time named Victoria, was first settled in the early 1830s. The village itself was never very large, but was the center of a relatively

thickly settled farm district. This community, for some years, bore the name 'Smut Eye.' A story persists that men of the settlement would gather outside of J.C. Brown's place of business, and in cold weather would build a fire. Mr. or Mrs. Brown, or both apparently had rules against drinking in their house. After spending several hours around the open fire talking and drinking, the men's faces would be coated with smut. Someone remarked that the men of the community always had smut around their eyes. The name stuck and the community is still sometimes referred to as Smut Eye.

Some of the people were incensed over the name applied to their community, however, and wanted a more appropriate name chosen. A movement was started by some of the young men in the late 1850s or early 1860s to change the name of Victoria, to honor a Miss 'Vick' Winslow, then the belle of the community. This was satisfactory with everyone, but for a long time the new name was seldom used. The story goes that Miss Winslow was highly flattered at the honor and would correct anyone who used the old name Smut Eye.

Miss Winslow is said to have owned the first piano in Coffee County. It was brought from Montgomery on a wagon in the late 1850s. The piano attracted people from miles around, who came to see and hear it, for it was an oddity and the people were curious.

Victoria never developed into a town, but remained through the years simply a rural community center. Many centers of population which were prominent before the Civil War have disappeared or their names have been changed.

Public education in Coffee County as in other frontier communities lagged. There were 666 people in Coffee County in 1850 who were illiterate. This was 32.58 per cent of the people twenty years old or older.

There were no public funds for the support of schools, consequently education was irregular and of poor quality. The people in a community, who were interested in educating their children, would build a school house and hire a teacher. These schools were supported by charging a small fee to clients and by private donations. There was no central agency for hiring teachers, and no particular qualifications were established as prerequisite to teaching. Teachers of any kind were scarce and the board of local school would hire an itinerate teacher with no information as to his qualifications but the candidate's assertion that he could handle the job. The school houses were very crude, usually being a typical frontier one room log building without glass windows.

There were seventeen schools in the county in 1850, and all of them were one teacher schools. The published census for 1850 gives the number of pupils enrolled in these schools as 290, but the number of children attending school as returned by families was 712. The schools probably reported the average attendance, while parents reported a child attending school, if he went just for a few days. During 1850 the total income for the seventeen schools was \$3,480 per year. This money all came from private sources, and averages only \$205.00 per school. The shortage of money caused the teacher's salaries to be very low and the school term short.

The state educational system was organized in the 1850s and provided for a county superintendent of education. J.C. Moore was the first person to hold that office in Coffee County. He was elected in the general election of 1855. The superintendent received no salary and acted only in an advisory capacity to the local school boards.

Until 1860 there was not a school in the county above the elementary level, but on January 1860, as noted above, the legislature granted a charter to the Clintonville Male and Female Academy. The trustees of the new school were Alfred McGee, John A. Fleming, William L. Watson, Asa R. Doolin, J.C. Moore, Lewis Hutchison, Jr. and A.B. Brooks. The trustees of the academy were granted the power to erect buildings, elect a president, and do the other things which were necessary for the operation of a boarding school. The school house, as completed in 1860, was a two story frame building painted white. The first head of the school was W.A. Edwards who won a plantation in Dale County. For the first term, 1860, Edwards had four teachers serving under him and an enrollment of around two hundred students. The Clintonville Academy was described by a contemporary as the best and longest term school in any of the adjoining counties. Edwards was followed as principal by J.J. Johnson, J.M. Sanders, and J.J. Langham.